



2006 Cooperative Extension Impact Report

BUILD WEALTH, NOT DEBT

**Thirty-two local campaigns in 20 States
enrolled 15,401 participants, who planned to save nearly \$1.5 million**

“It seemed so simple once I started doing it.” Ohio Saver

What is America Saves?

America Saves is a nationwide social marketing campaign to encourage all Americans, especially those of low to moderate means, to save and build wealth and reduce debt. Similar to health and safety campaigns to encourage buckling up and not drinking and driving, America Saves combines broad public awareness, small group education, and individual assistance to persuade people to select a savings goal and establish and commit to a simple plan. America Saves is offered locally by broad-based coalitions of government, business, and non-profit groups. Since its launch in 2002, major foundations such as Ford, Bank of America, Provident Financial, and the National Endowment for Financial Education® have supported this work.

How is Cooperative Extension involved?

Cooperative Extension is one of several organizations providing key leadership for Saves campaigns across the country. Money 2000™, the highly successful Cooperative Extension program designed for wrap-up early in this decade, provided a sound foundation for an effective transition to America Saves. Cooperative Extension educators elect to participate with America Saves at various levels. The simplest approach is to distribute brochures to recruit Savers. This report summarizes results from the most complex level of programming where Cooperative Extension leads or participates in local coalitions. Generally, it takes about a year to build a coalition and launch an effective local Saves program. Depending on local needs and resources, coalition building which leads to program delivery appears different in different localities. The most effective programs build awareness through mass media, provide motivational workshops, offer access to Saver coaches, and follow up with Savers to encourage success.

“Cooperative Extension agents have been key leaders of America Saves. They have organized local and statewide coalitions with hundreds of member groups that are responsible for the enrollment of tens of thousands of Savers and an increase in personal savings by millions of dollars a year.”

Stephen Brobeck, Executive Director, Consumer Federation of America, 2006

What difference does the program make for participants?

In 2006, Cooperative Extension in 20 States has either led or participated in a coalition to offer 32 local Saves campaigns. Key findings show:

- 15,401 Savers enrolled in 2006.
- The cumulative savings goal was \$1,465,615.
- The top three savings goals were for emergencies, savings/investments, and home ownership. Other goals were for debt repayment, retirement savings, and education.

What Is Cooperative Extension?

Cooperative Extension is a nationwide educational network that brings the research and knowledge of land-grant institutions to people in their homes, workplaces, and communities. Extension links the resources and expertise of more than 3,000 county Extension offices, 106 land-grant colleges and universities (which include historically black colleges, tribal colleges, and institutions serving the U.S. territories), and the federal government through USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). Extension educators deliver research-based programs through workshops, home-study courses, web-based curricula, and other methods to give people the knowledge, skills, and motivation to build financial security. The emphasis of Extension programs is on changing behaviors.

How has Cooperative Extension benefited from this partnership?

As with any effective partnership, each organization brings resources and expertise resulting in a greater impact than either could achieve alone. Consumer Federation of America provides such assistance as Saver sign-up brochures tailored to the local need, technical assistance including staff training and site visits, and challenge grants for start-up costs. Direct contributions to local Cooperative Extension offices include:

- Brochures, posters, and membership cards printed for local campaigns.
- Generic brochures ("brought to you by Cooperative Extension").
- Seed grants to Cooperative Extension educators.
- Travel for Extension educators to attend coordinator meetings.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.americasaves.org>

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fsll> (click on Tools for Educators, then Program Toolkit)



Prepared by CSREES-USDA with data provided by the Consumer Federation of America. For Extension questions related to America Saves contact Jane Schuchardt, National Program Leader, jschuchardt@csrees.usda.gov. For general information about America Saves contact Nancy Register, Consumer Federation of America Associate Director, nregister@consumerfed.org.

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